

tuberculous patients for a special charge, making all patients pay something if they can.

The other step is the tendency for private philanthropic dispensaries to gradually yield a portion of their financial burden to the city and the county. We cannot afford to be without the spirit of the philanthropic dispensary, and the men developed by it, but can we not have the same spirit, and perhaps the same men, in public dispensaries?

In making this suggestion I do not mean to imply that the time has come for doing away with private philanthropic dispensaries, and I do think that at present we need as many of both public and private dispensaries as we can get, but certainly the treatment of the tuberculous poor is a civic duty which cannot be adequately done by private charity.

THE VENEREAL DISEASE PROBLEM.*

By CHARLES R. BLAKE, M. D., Health Officer,
Richmond.

In a discussion of venereal diseases, I believe that a proper control of prostitution is the proper weapon. Prostitution is the burning question of the day. The interest in this question is nationwide and you can scarcely find any intelligent person who has not been thinking about it and who is not seeking information and advice.

Investigation has shown us that the cost of immorality to the country constitutes an enormous waste of hundreds of millions of dollars, added to the combined totals of our appalling national liquor and tobacco bills. But investigation cannot reveal or even faintly suggest the human suffering, sorrow, misery, degradation, disappointed hopes and family tragedies that follow in its wake; it cannot sum up the wrecked lives of several millions of men, women or children, nor the enormous and increasing sterility, which alone is alarming from the standpoint of national conservation.

Proven statistics of the City of New York showed that one in every five persons was affected with some form of venereal disease. As a matter of fact, the exact figures are immaterial, for we could not appreciate the awfulness of the evil if it were only one-tenth of the amount, and this is all due to the public prostitute. We are also aware that houses of prostitution are everywhere associated with the utmost political corruption; that officers of the law, doctors and politicians as well as the liquor merchant, make enormous profits from the traffic.

We know that there exists a vast army of vile creatures, called pimps, panders and macks, the most degraded of all human beings, who enslave and then fatten on the life-blood of their helpless girl victims; girls who after a few short years of sexual debauchery, drunkenness and drug intoxication, are dumped on to the street to drop yet lower, to be gathered into the almshouses or the hospitals to die.

Now what are the causes of prostitution? First of all, prostitution does not spring from the nat-

ural proneness of women toward vice. The prostitute herself, however degraded she may become, is a product and not a cause of anything, except in so far as she transmits contagious diseases grafted on her person by men; nor is the despised pimp the cause of the prostitute, nor yet the madam, nor are the officers of the law who tolerate the houses and graft on the inmates. We draw nearer the true source when we discover that many girls are driven to a life of shame by the low wages paid in factories and department stores. The blame, the cause of all causes, lies wholly on the shoulders of an indifferent public, upon our churches and upon our ministers, whose age-long ignorance of the facts is but added proof of neglected opportunities and of guilt. The guilt springs from the complete separation and loss of community interests of rich and poor, from division of society into classes without mutual interests.

The causes lie in the injustice of our industrial conditions, in many of our sweatshops, in our stores and factories. They lie in housing conditions, by which we rob the poor of all privacy and make cleanliness impossible. In the tenements they cry in vain for air, for light, for water and for provisions for decency and privacy for attending the wants of the body. Consider the filthy streets, the small courts, and poor little tots driven to get exercise and play their games in our dirty, dusty asphalt streets in the absence of proper playgrounds; shall we follow them as they grow up but gravitate downward to the low amusements provided to harvest their nickels, to the saloons, the dancehalls and the Sunday parks outside the city and then on down to a life of crime or immorality?

Venereal diseases are forms of contagion. Their control is the natural next step for departments of health. They are the only forms of markedly contagious disease not now definitely proceeded against by health officers, for most health officers, not knowing what to do, shut their eyes and affect to ignore them. Let us also lay aside that old ghost, ever popping up and pretending to be lively and scaring a lot of uninformed and untutored people. The name of that ghost is "segregation." Every man who has read nothing but the papers and has spoken to a few of his friends, naturally thinks that segregation is just one clever and natural way to handle prostitution. But this plan has been tried for centuries and especially noted during the past century, and it has been clearly proven that it does not work and that by it all the worse evils of prostitution are fostered, propagated and fastened upon the community. Segregation does not segregate more than one in ten women. Even if it worked ideally in controlling the women, it has never even pretended to control the men who are the active agents in carrying the infection from house to house, and for this reason alone it is a logical folly. It is also inseparately bound up with graft and official corruption.

In 1912, the New York Health Department adopted rules about along the same lines as the Chicago ordinance of 1909. They began enforc-

* Read before the Fifth Annual Conference of State, County, and Municipal Health Officials, Venice, October 6 to 11, 1913.

ing them in January last. By these rules, venereal diseases are made reportable. The register in which they are reported is not a public document in the sense of being accessible to every one. If experience demonstrates the need, special dispensaries and perhaps hospitals will be established. The best and most up-to-date treatment is given free if the affected person cannot pay. Special insistence is put upon the continuance of the treatment until cure is complete. The plan has met with some opposition; nevertheless, in less than six months, more than six thousand cases were reported. It has been found in New York rather easy to get venereal diseases reported.

With the abolishment of the "redlight district" in San Francisco and eventually all over the state by law which will shortly be voted on by the people of this state, known as the "Abatement Law," and it will surely win, it will be absolutely up to the boards of health of all cities to formulate a plan, which should be the same all over the state, to exterminate, if possible, all venereal diseases. The police authorities are out of it, as they acknowledge by this law that they are not able to control prostitution or venereal diseases. I do not think there is any way of preventing private prostitution, but with the co-operation of all physicians and the expenditure of some money on the part of all the cities, venereal diseases would soon be under complete control. All cases, women and men, should be treated free of charge, if not able to pay, and should be kept under strict observation until a permanent cure is effected, and if necessary, hospitals should be provided or wards set aside especially for the treatment of all such diseases.

THE FIFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF STATE, COUNTY, AND MUNICIPAL HEALTH OFFICIALS.

By W. A. SAWYER, M. D., Berkeley; Secretary of the Conference.

The Fifth Annual Conference of State, County, and Municipal Health Officials took place at Venice, California, from October 6 to 11, 1913. The conference was held in conjunction with the Sixteenth Annual Convention of the League of California Municipalities. The first day was devoted to registration, inspection of the manufacturers' and pure food exhibits, and attendance at the opening addresses before the general meeting.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1913.

MORNING SESSION.

The meeting was called to order at 10 A. M. Dr. Wm. F. Snow, Secretary of the State Board of Health, officiated as chairman. An address of welcome was delivered by Dr. W. M. Kendall, Health Officer of Venice. This was followed by a roll call, to which each delegate responded by stating briefly what he considered to be his greatest public health problem. Fourteen of the delegates complained of difficulty in getting adequate sewerage; five reported unsatisfactory water supplies; four had met with difficulties in enforcing

quarantine for communicable diseases; two had had trouble in controlling smallpox and enforcing vaccination. Others found their most serious problems in the management of the tuberculosis cases, the abatement of nuisances, the collection of garbage, the disposition of cases of leprosy, the methods of control of communicable diseases in general, and the inability to secure adequate funds for public health work.

A list of delegates attending the conference will be found at the end of this report.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

The subject for the afternoon was "Standard Methods of Public Health Administration." Dr. F. W. Browning, chairman of the Committee on Standard Methods of Public Health Administration, acted as chairman, and presented the opening paper, entitled, "The Aims and Objects of the Committee on Standard Methods of Public Health Administration." Dr. J. N. Force, secretary of the committee, read a report of the work of the committee in drawing up rules to be submitted to the State Board of Health for acceptance. As introduction to the report he read a paper on "Recent Legislation on Communicable Diseases in the United States." Dr. Force read to the conference the regulations for the control of rabies, which had been recently issued by the State Board of Health. These regulations showed a form which he recommended as being suitable for a complete code of regulations of the State Board of Health. The committee's recommendations for the control of the various diseases were taken up in order, and were accepted after general discussion and amendment.

Dr. Jackson Temple of Santa Rosa read a paper on "Suggested Improvements in Our Methods of Controlling the Common Contagious Diseases."

A paper entitled "Administrative Measures for the Control of Scarlet Fever," was read by Dr. J. J. Benton, health officer of Berkeley.

A paper on "Modifications in Administrative Measures Necessitated by the Carrier Problem," by Dr. F. W. Browning, was read by title.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1913.

MORNING SESSION.

The meeting was opened at 9 A. M., with a continuation of the discussion of methods for controlling communicable diseases.

Dr. W. A. Sawyer, director of the Hygienic Laboratory of the State Board of Health, gave a brief report of the activities of the laboratory since the last conference. During the year the laboratory administered the Pasteur anti-rabic treatment to 242 persons, and 345 animals' heads were examined for rabies with positive results in 297 instances, figures greater than those for the previous years combined. Many special epidemiological investigations were made, and the usual routine diagnostic work showed a considerable increase.

Professor M. E. Jaffa, director of the Food and Drug laboratory of the State Board of Health,